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# ROLE SHIFT, ANAPHORA AND DISCOURSE POLYPHONY IN SIGN LANGUAGE OF SOUTHERN BELGIUM (LSFB)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the role shift process, outside the context of direct speech. Arguments will be advanced which suggest that the role shift forms in non-direct speech consist in the neutralization of the value of person. The regular opposition of the gaze behaviour, between shifted and non-shifted forms, constitutes the main argument for this assumption. Following this, such person neutralized forms are studied within three syntactic constructions of LSFB. From this analysis, it becomes clear that their referential interpretation is closely dependent on the syntactic arrangement of the phrase. Finally, in accordance with Ducrot's (1984) enunciation theory, the multi-voiced ("polyphonic") effect produced by the presence of person neutralization form(s) within a phrase is specified as an intertwining of the point of view of an Enunciator with the voice of a Speaker. It is distinguished from the enunciative functioning of direct speech, which involves two distinct Speakers.

This paper will focus on the phenomenon, specific to signed languages, in which "the signer's body actions [...] iconically represent the body actions of a referent person" (Taub 2001: 88). Many authors use "role shift" as a sort of generic term for this mechanism and as a starting point in their analysis, even if the theoretical approach adopted and the features observed lead to terminological variety. For example, Lillo-Martin (1995) speaks of "point of view predicate", Metzger (1994) distinguishes between "constructed action" and "constructed dialogue", Vermeerbergen (1996) differentiates "iconic role taking", "formal role taking" and "reference shift", and Engberg-Pedersen (1995) makes a difference between "shifted reference", "shifted locus" and "shifted attribution of expressive elements". In the French literature, the most widespread terminology is Cuxac's (2000); he talks about "personal transfer" (*transfert personnel*) and distinguishes several subclasses within this process: "Stereotypical personal transfer", "pseudo-personal transfer", "double-personal transfer" and "semi-personal transfer" (*stéréotype de transfert personnel, pseudo-transfert personnel, double transfert personnel* and *semi-*

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1 The initials "LSFB" stand for "Langue des Signes Française de Belgique", the name used in official decrees about the sign language of the Deaf Community of southern Belgium; however, the name "Langue des Signes de Belgique Francophone (LSBF)" is now also used by the Deaf Community (cf. [www.ffsb.be](http://www.ffsb.be)). In order to avoid the reference to the French country ("française") or to the French spoken language ("francophone"), the more neutral description "Sign Language of southern Belgium" is used here, which refers to the region where the language is being used. However, the official abbreviation "LSFB" is adopted.

*transfert personnel*).<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the term “role shift” will at first be used in a broad sense: as referring to the general iconic impression given by some forms, that (part of) the signer’s body represent (part of) a character’s body; but the mechanism will only be discussed outside the context of direct speech. One of the major aims of the analysis presented here is to provide such “role shift” forms appearing outside direct speech with a specific grammatical definition, consistent with both its behaviour in different syntactic structures and its discursive features.

In the first part of the study, arguments will be presented suggesting that role shift forms as used outside the field of direct speech, consist in the neutralization of the value of person. This will be part of a wider discussion of referential mechanisms, where it will be shown that gaze is to be considered the organizing principle. From the analysis of the personal pronoun system of LSFB, for example, it will become clear that the addressing of the gaze should be considered as founding the deictic frame of reference. Hence, suspending addressing the gaze means that anaphoric frames of reference are being created. It will be shown that within this creative process, a distinction needs to be made between two different anaphoric frames of reference: the field of “locus values” and the “person neutralization” field. Both imply a different relation between the signer’s body and the anaphoric field. “Role shift” forms will be shown as being related to the “person neutralization” field.

The second part will illustrate the use of “person neutralization” forms within three syntactic structures, observed in a corpus of LSFB narratives. It will highlight the fact that the semantic interpretation of the person neutralized form, as referring to one or another character of the narrative, depends on the syntactic structure in which the role shift form appears.

Finally, the third part of the paper will study the enunciative status of these person neutralization cases, and will show that the point of view they mark, in the three structures studied, cannot be confused with the enunciative voice of the Speaker in direct speech. Discourse analysis supports, on the one hand, the choice of discussing role shifts within and outside quoted speech contexts separately and, on the other, the hypothesis that, outside direct reported speech, role shift forms are person neutralized forms. From that, it follows that “shifted locus” as described by Engberg-Pedersen (1995) should be strictly restricted to non-direct speech contexts. At first sight similar examples appearing in direct-speech contexts should not be considered in the same way.

## **1 Role shift and person neutralization**

In line with Meier’s (1990) study on ASL, several influential works (Engberg-Pedersen 1993, Liddell 2000, 2003, Nilsson 2004) support the idea that the personal pronouns

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2 The notion of “double-personal transfer” will be discussed further in the paper (see section 2.3). It refers to the combination of a personal transfer (i.e. the use of the speaker’s body to reproduce one or several actions accomplished or undergone by an actor of the utterance’s process) and a situational transfer (i.e. the iconic reproduction, in the space in front of the signer, of the spatial moving of an agent in relation to a steady located object). A typical example of double-personal transfer is used to express the movement of an actor in relation to a character that is “transferred” to the signer’s body.

system of signed languages does not distinguish between the second and third person. Instead, there is a binary opposition between first and non-first person. Meier's main arguments shared by the other authors are (i) the lack of difference in directionality between a pronoun referring to the addressee and a pronoun referring to a non-addressee; (ii) the non-relevant status of eye gaze, since eye gaze at the addressee occurs with second person pronominal reference as well as with first person pronominal reference, and since it is also present in discourse where no reference to participants in the discourse is made; and (iii) the infinite variety of pronouns that would be classified as third person and second person ones, because of the infinite variety of the possible spatial realization of each.<sup>3</sup> This argumentation seems to take for granted that the value of person depends on the actual participants of the discourse.<sup>4</sup> It also appears that, in this argumentation, if manual and non-manual features are taken into account, they are each expected to be relevant independently of the other, before they are considered to be grammatically relevant. Hence, since eye gaze by itself does not behave specifically in pronouns directed to the addressee, in comparison with reference made to other participants in the discourse, eye gaze is considered as a linguistically irrelevant feature with respect to the value of person. Therefore, Baker & Cokely (1980), as well as Berenz & Ferreira Brito's (1987) hypothesis, according to which the signer's eye gaze grammatically differentiates second and third person pronouns, are disproved.

The study of the personal (singular) pronouns system in LSFB, however, clearly demonstrates the central role of eye gaze in the construction of the value of person; but it needs to be analyzed as one component of a ratio rather than as an isolated feature. Furthermore, in this analysis, a distinction is made between, on the one hand, the value of person as a specific issue of the linguistic activity, and, on the other, the pointing out of the actual actors, participating in the communication.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1 The system of personal pronouns in LSFB

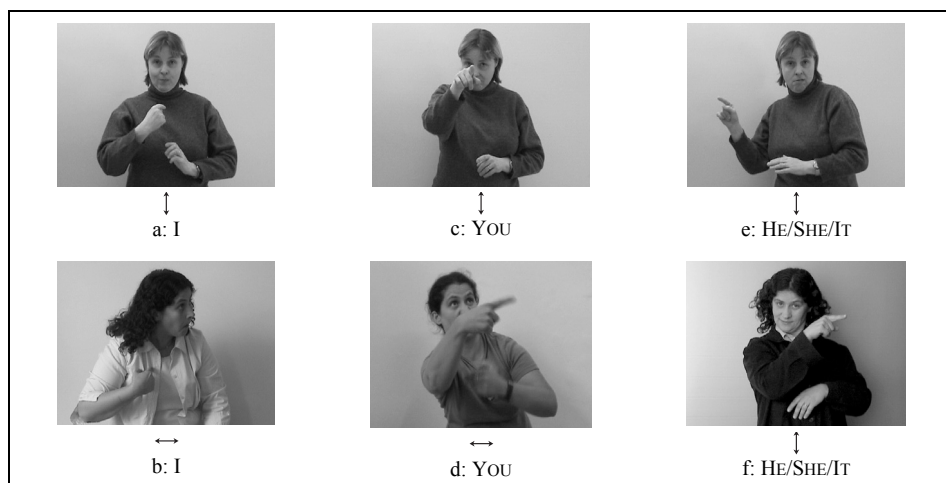
With respect to the six examples of pronominal forms presented in Figure 1, respectively considered by the signers as signifying 'I' (forms a and b), 'he/she/it' (forms c and d) and 'you' (forms e and f), it appears that no point in space is of itself more appropriate to refer to a 'you' than it is to refer to a 'he', 'she' or 'it' referent. This observation is consistent with Meier's (1990) and Engberg-Pedersen's (1993) claims. But it is worth underlining the permanent relation between gaze and hands through the different forms of 'I', of 'you' and of 'he/she/it'. Whatever the physical directions of both the pointing of the hand and the gaze, in all six cases gaze is directed, and creates the position of an addressee. In this

3 See Liddell (2003:23-26) for an elaboration of these arguments.

4 It seems that the notion of "addressee", for Meier and his colleagues, is defined as the actual person to whom the actual sender is signing. The fact that, within a model which claims that there is no second person value, the notion of "second person pronominal reference" is nevertheless being used, seems to allude to the real and physical properties of the canonical encounter in conversations.

5 The value of person (as well as other deictic values) receives a strictly linguistic definition here, and is considered as non-existent outside the speech act. This means that in order for a speaker or a signer to address a 'you' it is not necessary that an actual addressee is present. And if a signer or speaker says 'I', this does not necessarily refer to him- of herself.

addressing context, when the hand shares the same direction as the gaze, it produces the value of ‘you’. When the hand points in a different direction as the addressed gaze, it produces the value of ‘he/she/it’. And finally, the pointing sign (PS) towards the chest creates the value of ‘I’ also in relation to gaze which is addressing the ‘you’. In other words, even if the pointing signs of pictures d and f, in Figure 1, are spatially similar, they receive a distinct linguistic value (‘you’ vs. ‘he/she/it’) because of their specific relation with the gaze-addressing direction. The gaze to the addressee then, appears to be the constant landmark from which a pointing sign receives its personal value.<sup>6</sup>



*Figure 1: Personal pronouns in LSFB*

It should be stressed that this analysis does not take into account the physical location of the actual participants in the discourse; on the contrary, it brings out the abstract status of the value of person inaugurated by the addressing of the gaze. For this reason, the “addressee” is not equivalent, here, to the actual interlocutor, and the notion of “gaze-addressing” does not imply eye contact with the actual interlocutor. The addressee is considered as an abstract position that only exists through the speech act.

The proposal to consider the relation between the gaze and the manual articulators is partly akin to Berenz’s (2002:207) proposal, which reveals the coordinated functioning of gaze, head, chest and handshape positions to distinguish pronominal references. But, pursuing Berenz’s own formula, the constant behaviour of the gaze, observed in the forms of personal pronouns, leads to the recognition that not only “the first and second persons exist by virtue of the act of address itself” (2002:208), but also the third person.<sup>7</sup> The

6 The study of Coursil (2000) on “dialogism” and the category of person, offers an enlightening theoretical framework to understand the status of these features of LSFB in terms of general linguistics.

7 The third person, following these observations, does not receive the status of a “non-person” (this radically differs from Berenz’s analysis, as well as from Benveniste’s theory). It is distinguished from the anaphoric values, which come from the addressing of the gaze being cut off. About the consequences of this interpretation for a theory of person in general linguistics, see Meurant (2006a).

address of the gaze appears to be the landmark point of personal reference; and, since the value of person is considered to be the basis of deixis (Fraser & Joly 1979:110), the gaze-addressing can be said to be the fundamental deictic indicator. Consequently, the infinite variety of positions and directions in space that the hands and the gaze can take, during the articulation of personal pronouns, is reduced to a ternary set of relations between the PS and the gaze-addressing, giving rise to the values of first, second and third persons.

Beyond the pronominal system, the behaviour of the so called “agreement verbs” sustains the same claims, and provides further evidence of the central role played by the gaze in the construction of referential values in signed languages. The opposition between addressed and “unaddressed” gaze in these verbs is relevant to distinguish two kinds of values: the personal forms will be differentiated from those that Engberg-Pedersen (1995) described as “shifted locus” examples, and those will be described here in terms of “person neutralization”.

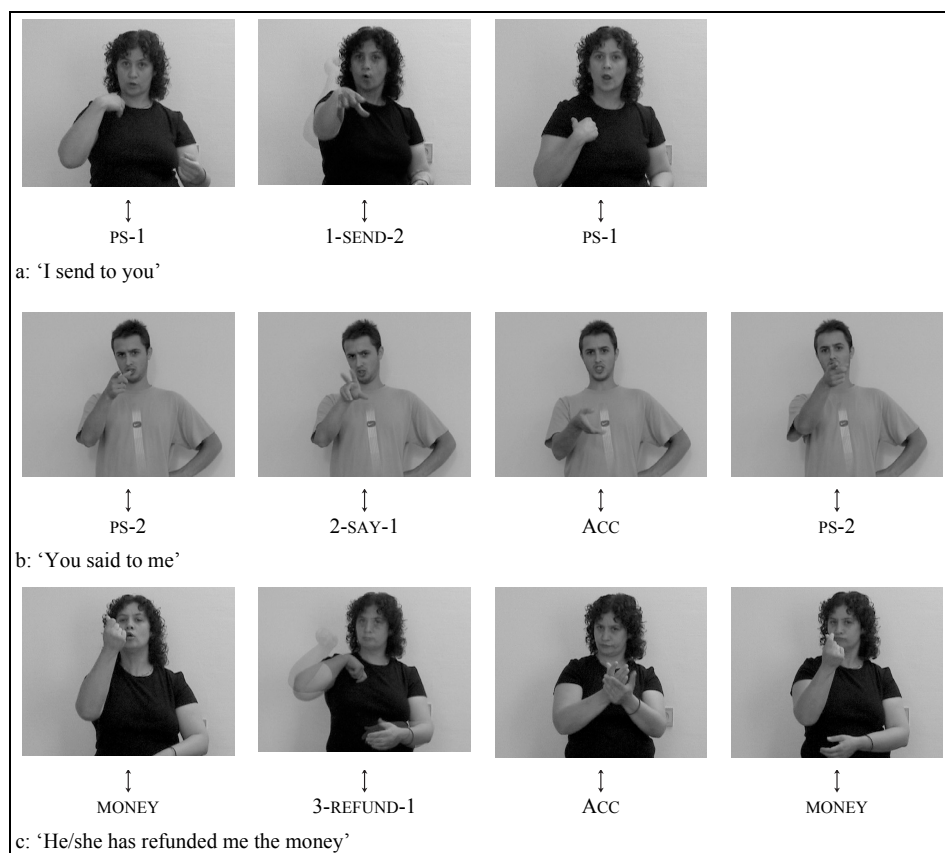
## 1.2 Role shift and agreement verbs

Double agreement verbs are described in Engberg-Pedersen (1993, 1995) as including two argument cells: they can be spatially modified for marking two “loci”. The locus is defined, in the same works, as a direction from the signer, or a point (or area) within the signing space, where an entity referred to is actually situated (deictic locus), or which represents a referent (anaphoric locus) (1995:145).<sup>8</sup> An example of such verbs in Danish Sign Language (as in LSFB, and probably other signed languages) is *SEND*. This verb can be modified for two loci – which may both be different from the sender locus (or ‘c-locus’) – in directing its movement path from one locus to the other. Supposing that a first referent (A) has been associated with an ‘a-locus’, situated on the signer’s right, and another referent (B) with a ‘b-locus’ on the left, the movement of *SEND* from the ‘a-locus’ to the ‘b-locus’ marks agreement with both arguments, and provokes the meaning of ‘A sends to B’.

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8 The notion of “locus” will receive a slightly different definition in this study, but only in section 1.3. Until then, the term “locus” is to be understood in the sense of Engberg-Pedersen (1993, 1995).

Despite this morphological composition, Engberg-Pedersen draws attention to the tendency of these verbs to avoid agreement with respect to one of the arguments: most often, double agreement verbs only show modification for one locus different from the sender locus, even when neither argument has first person reference (1993:155, 1995:147). Thus, the sender locus can be used either for a first person argument, or for what the author considers to be a marker of agreement omission or a point-of-view marker (1995:148). The latter case illustrates the mechanism of “shifted locus”, since “the signer lets one of the referents take over the sender locus” (1995:147).



*Figure 2: Agreement verbs including personal values*

Figure 2 shows three examples of double agreement verbs in LSFB: SEND (ENVOYER), SAY (DIRE) and REFUND (REMBOURSER). In all these cases, the initial and the final position of the hand represent referential values that are personal values; they need to be understood from the relation between the hand(s) and the addressing of the gaze. In 1-SEND-2, the hand moves from the sender locus, in the same direction as the gaze-addressing direction: it signifies 'I send to you'. The movement of 2-SAY-1 is also coincident with the direction of the addressed gaze, but it starts away from the signer, and ends in a contact

with the signer's chest, signifying 'you said to me'.<sup>9</sup> In both these examples, the initial referential value is redundantly marked both in the verb itself and by one or two PS(s). With the 3-REFUND-1 example, the hand moves towards the signer locus, but follows a path (from forward right to the signer) which is non-coincident with the line of the addressed gaze (straight forward the signer): this form signifies 'he/she has refunded me'. From analyzing these forms, it becomes clear that the personal value is identically marked in the PSs described above as personal pronouns, and in double agreement verbs. In other words, the value of person results from the relation between the directions of the hand and the addressed gaze, regardless of whether the hand produces a PS or an agreement verb, or one after the other. Again, the linguistic value created by the hand and gaze ratio is not made dependent on the physical presence of the referents. In the case of the 3-REFUND-1 form, the referent of the third person is not present during the utterance; however, as a result of the addressed gaze, it is, in a way, "linguistically actualized" and it is defined according to the relation with the deictic frame of reference.

The comparison between Figure 3 and Figure 4 (both illustrating the double agreement verb NURSE (SOIGNER) in LSF) shows that both uses of the sender locus, i.e. in first person forms and in "shifted locus" forms, are not completely homophonic: a difference in gaze behaviour opposes them. The gaze is addressed with the personal form, but the addressing is suspended with the "shifted locus" form. Since the address of the gaze has been seen as the deictic indicator, suspending this address (e.g. by diverting or closing the eyes) can be understood as interrupting the deictic reference.

As Figure 3, Figure 4 shows a form of the double agreement verb NURSE (SOIGNER), which marks the 'c-locus' in its initial cell, and which is preceded by a PS towards the 'c-locus'. However, the comparison between the two examples brings out an opposition in the gaze behaviour.

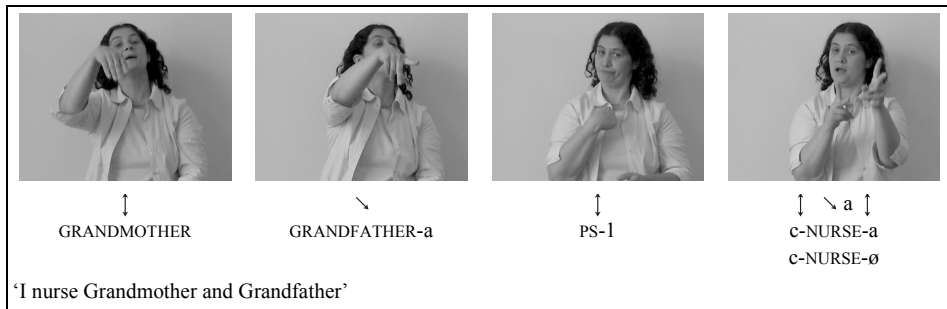
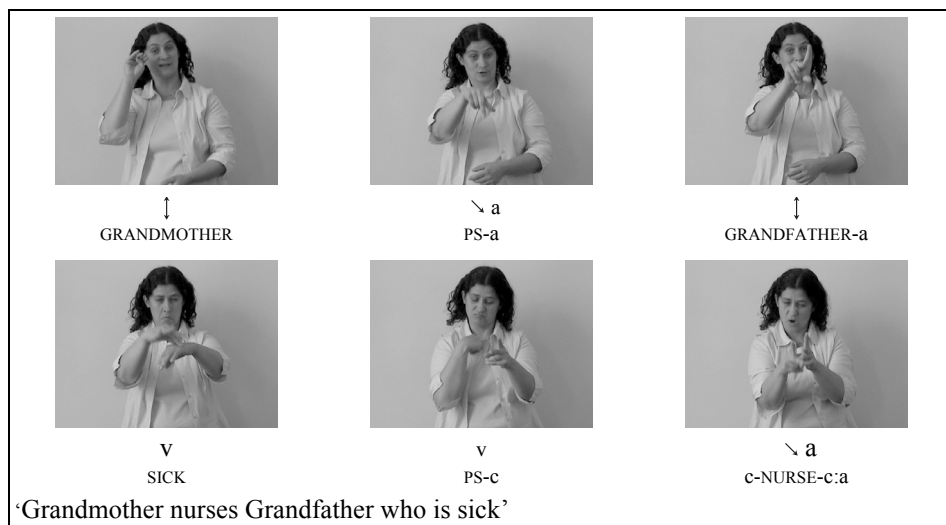


Figure 3: Personal form of NURSE (including also a value of locus)

9 The accomplished aspect is shown by the sign transcribed here as ACC.





*Figure 4: Person-neutralized form of NURSE*

In Figure 3, during the PS towards the chest (third picture), the eyes are addressed and a first person value is created. Next, during the verb (last picture), the eyes first briefly glance to the left, where the noun GRANDFATHER has previously been located (second picture), then come back to the same (addressed) position they had during the PS. This signifies ‘I nurse him and her’.<sup>10</sup> The movement and the fingers of the left hand are slightly facing left, and as such they are directed to the same spatial area as the one that the gaze briefly installed by its glance at the start of the verb sign.<sup>11</sup> In the last picture of Figure 4, on the other hand, one notices again that the movement and the fingers in NURSE take the direction of the area previously associated with the noun GRANDFATHER (in this case, they are directed forward down). But the ‘c-locus’ does not signify, as it did in Figure 3, a first person value: instead, it refers to “grandmother”, and the verb here signifies ‘Grandmother nurses Grandfather’.

This phenomenon (i.e. the use of the sender locus for reference to somebody else (and not to the signer) and without reference to a first person) can be put in relation with the interruption of the gaze-addressing, shown in Figure 4 during the verb as well as during the preceding PS toward the signer’s chest. During the production of the PS, the eyes are closed; they are slightly open during the articulation of the verb, and the gaze is directed towards the ‘a-locus’ forward down. We assume that the interruption of the gaze-addressing, in such cases, functions as a signal of the non-deictic (that is to say, the anaphoric) nature of the references spatially built by the hands and the gaze. The ‘c-locus’ is no longer put in relation with the deictic landmark, since the eyes are diverted from the

<sup>10</sup> Each hand, in the verb of Figure 3, can be seen to be marking agreement with one argument only: GRANDMOTHER for the right hand and GRANDFATHER for the left hand.

<sup>11</sup> The right hand moves in a slightly different direction from the left hand, that way relating to GRANDMOTHER, for which no specific placement has been provided by the gaze.

address-line or even closed: therefore, within the verb as well as the pointing sign, the signer locus ('c-locus') does not receive first person value. Because of the gaze behaviour, it is made independent of the deictic frame of reference. This characteristic interruption of the gaze-addressing will be considered here as formally defining the "shifted locus" mechanism, and as being responsible for the marking of point of view in the discourse. But an additional remark is necessary to situate the difference of status between, on the one hand, the interruption of the gaze-addressing shown with the pointing sign and the verb in Figure 4, and, on the other, the glance to the left observed at the beginning of the verb in Figure 3. Section 1.3 will present these two mechanisms as reflecting two kinds of anaphoric processes.

### 1.3 Role shift and anaphoric frames of reference

The comparison of the two examples illustrated by Figures 3-4 with the one in Figure 5 suggests that the anaphoric references built by the interruption of the addressing of the gaze are of two kinds, most often occurring in combination (which makes the analysis quite complex).

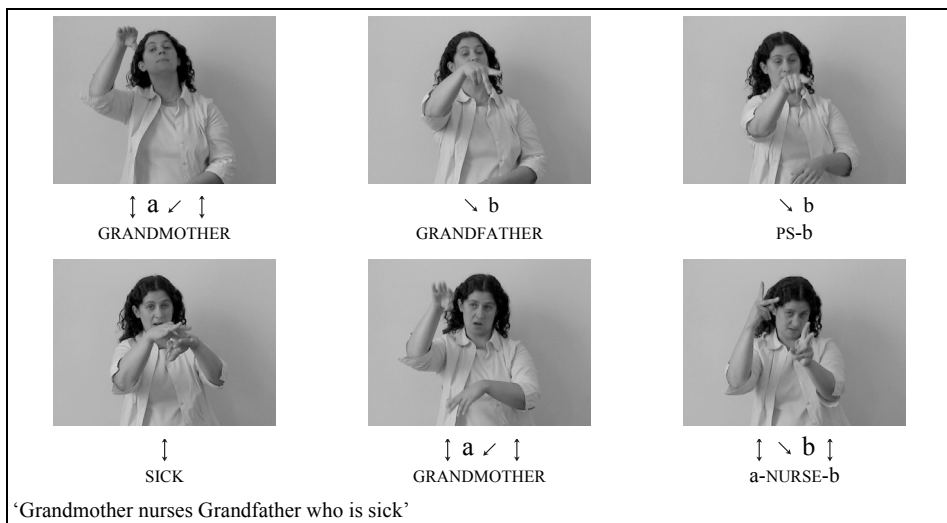


Figure 5: Personal form of NURSE, independent of 'c-locus' and including locus values

Figures 5 and 3 illustrate the first kind of anaphoric value in some of their components. The principle is that the gaze is directed towards the space in front of the signer, within which it focuses on specific points or areas as such providing them with a grammatical relevance. In Figure 5, the area located forward right is briefly focused by the gaze during the articulation of GRANDMOTHER, in the first and fifth pictures; hence, it receives a grammatical status for the remaining of the utterance. In the same way, the area situated in front of the signer is focused by the gaze in the second and the third picture of Figure 5 and is grammatically associated with the noun GRANDFATHER. When in the last picture, the movement of the verb NURSE is oriented from one area to the other, this implies the inclu-

sion of both grammatical (and anaphoric) values and reference to both associated nouns ('Grandmother nurses Grandfather'). The same occurs in Figure 3: in the second picture, the gaze indicates a point slightly to the left, which is associated with GRANDFATHER for the remaining of the utterance (as already explained in section 1.2).

This first referential process largely corresponds to what Engberg-Pedersen presents as the use of anaphoric loci (1995: 145) – even if the author does not give to the gaze the central role in creating such loci. Therefore, the same term "locus" will be used here. However, the creation of a reference in relation to the signer, which Engberg-Pedersen associates with the same mechanism, will here be considered separately from the creation of anaphoric loci (cf. below, the notion of "pseudo-deictic anaphora"). In sum, the first anaphoric process that will be referred to is the creation of locus values; the signer plots grammatical values in the signing space in front of him or her, by focusing points or areas of this space. It has already been underlined that this process (1) is not tied up with the use of the signer locus ('c-locus') in agreement verbs, as the form a-NURSE-b in Figure 5 shows; and (2) is not incompatible with the value of person, as Figure 3 shows: the marking for a locus within the verb does not exclude the first person pronoun just preceding the verb.

The pointing sign and the verbal form of Figure 4 show a different kind of anaphoric value. The closing of the eyes during the pointing sign of the fifth picture causes the detachment from the deictic landmark of gaze-addressing. This has been interpreted above as the general signal for the creation of anaphoric values. But what is striking (and what contrasts with the example of Figure 3) is that the diverting of the gaze from the address-line occurs not only with the verb form, but also with the PS to the 'c-locus' in Figure 4: the scope of the interruption of the gaze-addressing is wider, and excludes the marking of a personal value with the PS. The designation of the signer's chest in this PS coincides with the breaking away from the deictic frame of reference: the 'c-locus' does not receive first person value; instead, the signer's body becomes the centre of a new frame of reference.

We propose to analyze this mechanism as creating a second kind of anaphoric frame of reference: the field of "person neutralization". It consists of the grammaticalization of the signer's body and space, which for the remaining of the utterance becomes the referential centre. This frame of reference comes from the interruption of the addressing of the gaze (by closing the eyes or diverting them from the addressee), coincident with the marking of the 'c-locus' in agreement verbs, and also present during the (optional) PS towards the chest, which precedes or follows the verb. This PS towards the 'c-locus' does not have the value of first person, because of the absence of gaze addressing.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, the 'a-locus' installed by the gaze focus, in the second picture of Figure 4, becomes, during the verb NURSE, what can be described as a 'c:a-locus': the same point in space in front of the signer receives a new definition, being made dependent on the new

12 At the end of the verb, the gaze comes back to the addressing direction it has left from the sign SICK. This fact, which occurs at the end of the excerpt, can be understood as a return of the Speaker's voice (the neutral narrator) at the end of the utterance (cf. section 3). Again, the presence of the pointing sign before the verb during which the eyes are closed (and the regularity of this configuration in the analyzed corpus) is taken as an argument for this analysis, and for distinguishing this coming back of the Speaker's voice from the gaze behaviour which specifies the value of locus.

referential centre, namely the signer's body. The fact of defining spatial value from the centre point of the signer can be seen as creating "pseudo-deictic anaphora". This terminology underlines the fact that, in their dependence on the person neutralization, the referents are conceptualized as present in the signer space:<sup>13</sup> a principle of ostension enters the anaphoric field. The scope of this study does not allow the functioning and the varieties of such "pseudo-deictic anaphoras" to be described in more detail: we simply emphasize that, if the gaze features are taken as the organizing principle of reference in LSFb, defining a spatial value starting from the sender space proves to be a different process than defining anaphoric loci (in the sense given above).

In summary, starting from the identification of gaze-addressing as the deictic landmark in relation to which the value of person emerges, the interruption of this address has been understood as building anaphoric fields of reference. Within the anaphoric process, a distinction has been made between the creation of locus values and the neutralization of person. A locus is the result of the grammaticalization of a point or area in the signing space in front of the signer by the fact that this point or area is the target of the gaze. The signer's body is not part of this anaphoric frame of reference. Person neutralization consists in the grammaticalization of the signer's body, which becomes the very centre of an anaphoric frame of reference, hence the frame of reference is surrounding the signer.

The person neutralization phenomenon has been defined, and differentiated from establishing loci, through this study of agreement verbs in LSFb. It has been described as the formal characteristic defining the "shifted locus" analyzed by Engberg-Pedersen (1995).

The next section will illustrate that other verb categories show the same possibility as agreement verbs to undergo person neutralization: they give rise to the same shift of the "c-locus" and create the same marking for point of view in the utterance.

#### 1.4 Person neutralization outside the cases of agreement verbs

Agreement verbs contain many different elements that together signal person neutralization: these elements are: (1) the marking for the 'c-locus', (2) an optional PS towards the chest and (3) the interruption of the gaze-address. The combination of these features makes apparent the difference between the person neutralization and the marking for anaphoric loci, where gaze diversion has a more restricted scope and appears as a brief glance within a context of gaze-addressing.

We will now study other kinds of verbs where these three elements are not always all present. The verbs are presented in pairs in Figures 6-10: one form (b) produces the general iconic effect of "role shift", and the other (a) does not. This comparison reveals the systematic relation between the role shift forms, where the signer seems to lend his or her body to a represented character, and the suspending of the addressing of the gaze.

13 Liddell (2003) speaks about "surrogates" and "surrogate space". See also Emmorey (2002:68) and Janzen (2004:150). We underline that this "conceptualized presence" is a mere linguistic and referential effect, not to be confused with the necessity of an actual presence.

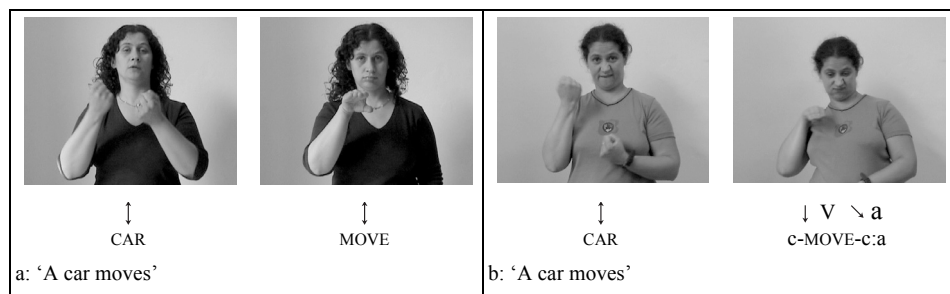


Figure 6: Non-shifted vs. shifted form of MOVE

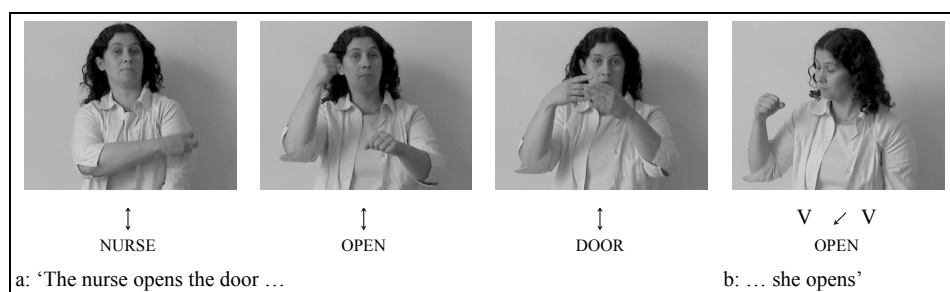


Figure 7: Non-shifted vs. shifted form of OPEN

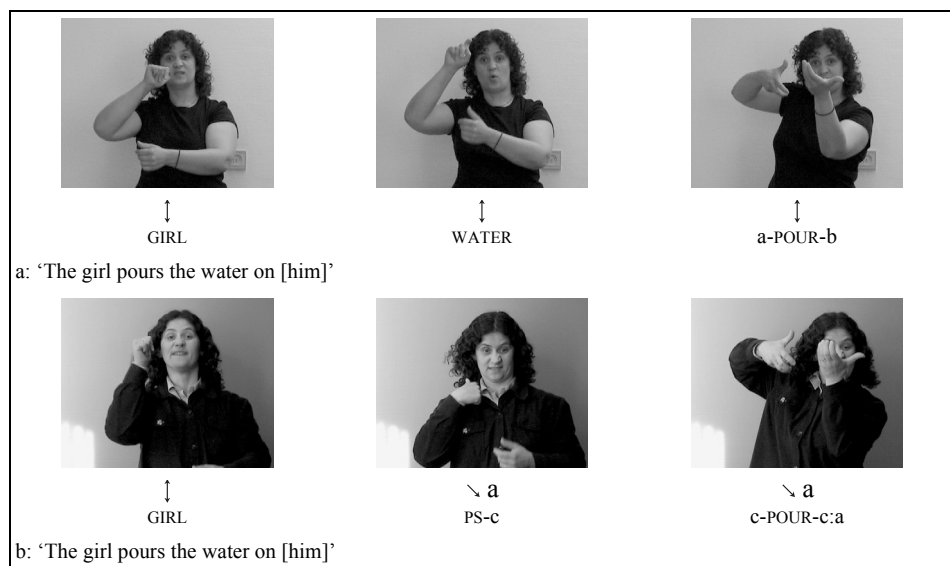


Figure 8: Non-shifted vs. shifted form of POUR

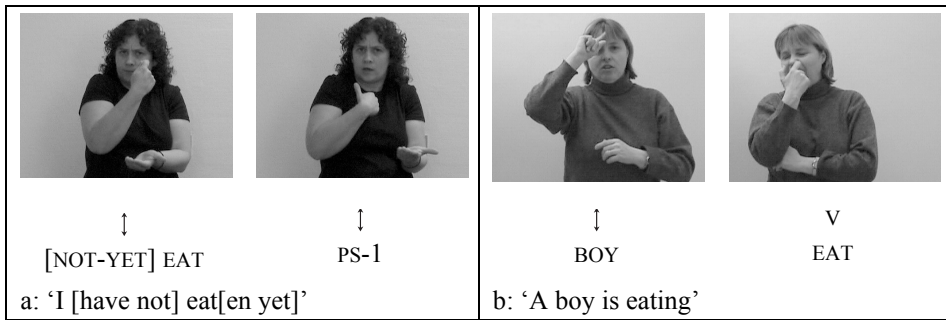


Figure 9: Non-shifted vs. shifted form of EAT



Figure 10: Non-shifted vs. shifted form of WALK

The morphological description of these verbs of LSFB will not be the purpose of this study (see Meurant, 2006b). According to the more widely shared typologies, established in the study of numerous signed languages, MOVE (AVANCER) in Figure 6 could be considered as a “verb of movement”; OPEN (OUVRIR) in Figure 7 and POUR (VERSER) in Figure 8, as “handling verbs”; and WALK (MARCHER), in Figure 10, can be classed as a “limb classifier predicate” (Emmorey 2002:81) or a “verb of locomotion” (Supalla 1990). As for EAT, in Figure 9, it would be seen as a plain verb. However, there is no sharp distinction between the “handling” and the “limb” class, as Engberg-Pedersen (1993:278) and Emmorey (2002:81) clearly point out; moreover, the “plain” status of EAT could be questioned, since the relative position of the hand and the signer’s face can be seen as reflecting the canonical posture of the limbs of an eating referent.

Nevertheless, the same phenomenon of interrupting the addressing of the gaze characterizes the shifted forms (i.e. the ‘b’ forms) of each verb, whatever category it belongs to (or is associated with). In correlation with an eventual anchoring of the sign on the signer’s body, the eyes are diverted away from the signer (as in MOVE, and POUR),<sup>14</sup> are completely closed (as with EAT and WALK), or almost closed, with the punctuation of eye blinks (five eye blinks during the form of OPEN): in these different ways, we see the same principle of breaking away from the deictic landmark.

The example given in Figure 7 is analogous to the handling construction commented by Engberg-Pedersen (1995:150) as an extension of the “shifted locus” mechanism to the description of the handling of an object. In the same way as both realizations of FIX in Engberg-Pedersen’s example are signed one after the other in the same utterance, the non-shifted and the shifted verb in Figure 7 are only separated by the noun DOOR in the utterance. The same event is successively described in two ways: “neutrally [...] when the signer has eye contact with the receiver, and from a specific point of view, where the agent takes over the sender locus [...]” (*ib.*). Instead of explaining these shifted cases by resorting to the concept of the canonical encounter of the communication – seeing in them the confrontation between the agent and the object he or she is opening or fixing – we suggest that these examples can be considered as person neutralized forms, in contrast with the corresponding personal forms characterized by the addressing of the gaze. This analysis has the advantage of accounting for the (iconic and semantic) similarity between these forms and all the other shifted forms, by relating them to a single grammatical process, which is based on the regularity of the gaze behaviour. It also allows to take into account without paradox that such examples occur in monologues, where there is no reported speech, but yet express two different points of view (one of the neutral narrator and one of a character) (cf. section 3).

In all these cases, set in relation one with the other and with the agreement verb examples, the same opposition can be seen between the verbal forms which explicitly make allusion to the deictic frame of reference, by the addressing of the gaze (i.e. the personal forms), and those which show, by suspending the address, independence from the deictic frame of reference, and result in the signer’s body becoming the centre of reference (i.e. the person neutralized forms).

## 1.5 Summary

This first part of the study has been devoted to the observation of the regular properties of the gaze, in verbal forms showing the general iconic effect of a “role shift”. In all the examples discussed, the apparent shift between the signer’s body and that of one of the characters occurs outside the context of reported dialogue. The systematic comparison between these forms and corresponding non-shifted ones, put in relation with the analysis of the system of personal pronouns in LSFB, led to the recognition of the fundamental role of the eye gaze in the construction of reference in LSFB. According to the gaze behaviour, the same sign (a PS or a verb), with the same spatial features, can receive different values: two different deictic values (e.g. second vs. third person in Figure 1, pictures d vs. f), or

14 In both cases, a pseudo-deictic locus is installed in relation with the signer’s space: c-MOVE-c:a, c-POUR-c:a.

sometimes a deictic, sometimes an anaphoric status (e.g. first person value vs. person neutralization value are attributed the ‘c-locus’, in the examples a vs. b of Figures 6-10).

The deictic construction of references has been studied through the system of personal pronouns in LSF. The value of person has been described as resulting from the “ratio” given by the hand parameters related to the constant addressing of the gaze: neither the position of the hand in space nor the direction of the gaze can be said, on their own, to be of linguistic relevance, but only the abstract result of their relation. This view, based on the observation of LSF, provides arguments for re-considering the notion of person in signed languages, and specifically for the distinction between the second and third person.

The same attention to the gaze led us to make a fundamental distinction between two uses of the sender locus (‘c-locus’): one is associated with an addressed gaze, and denotes the value of the first person, while the other coincides with a suspending of the gaze-addressing, and is systematically interpreted as designating a non-first person referent. The proposal has been made to see this opposition as coherent with the crucial status of gaze revealed by the personal pronoun system. Since gaze-addressing constitutes the landmark for the construction of deictic values (and, as a prototypical example, personal values), suspending the addressing can be understood as interrupting the reference to the deictic frame of reference, and therefore possibly leading to the neutralization of the personal values (the creation of locus values in the signing space has been presented as another kind of anaphoric process, which is not incompatible with the marking for a personal value). The notion of person neutralization offers the possibility of providing a grammatical definition of the “shifted locus” process observed by Engberg-Pedersen with agreement verbs, but even more of extending it beyond the cases of agreement verbs, outside direct speech contexts.

Defining role shift forms (out of direct speech) as unmarked for person also provides an explanation for making the signer’s space and body suitable to refer to any character of the story he or she is telling. In other words, the under-specification of these forms opens up a multiplicity of possible referential interpretations. It will be shown in the next section that the semantic interpretation of the role shift forms is, to certain extent, dependent on the syntactic context.

## 2 Role shift<sup>15</sup> and syntax

This second part will focus on three syntactic structures which make use of person neutralization forms. All three were used by four deaf signers of LSF who were asked to tell the narratives presented in illustrated stories or cartoons. These three structures are built from the relation between two or three verbs: they illustrate the already well commented tendency of signed languages to combine several verbs: “verb sandwiches” (Fischer and Janis 1990) and “serial verb constructions” (Supalla 1990) are well known examples of combination of several verbs in signed languages.

The description of these structures is part of a larger work consisting in the elaboration of a typology of syntactic relations, pursuing a French model of general linguistics, called

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15 From this point, the phrase “role shift” will be made a synonym of “person neutralization”.

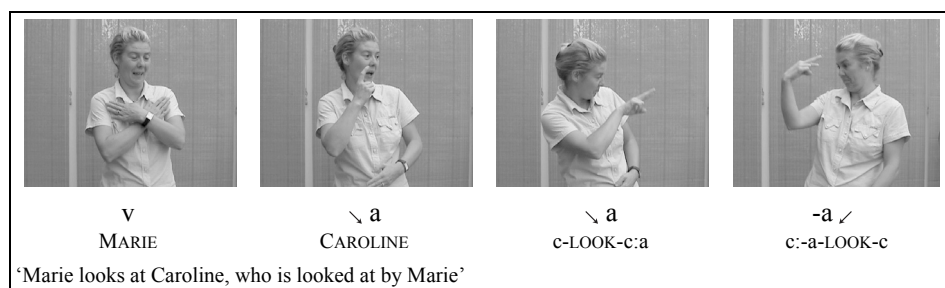


“glossology” (Allaire 1982). This theoretical framework is characterized by the fact that no semantic or logical criterion takes part in the syntactic description. In this model, the notion of “sentence”, which takes for granted the correspondence between the semantic and logical structure of a predication, on the one hand, and the grammatical structure of the utterance, on the other hand, has no relevance. Rather than describing the hierarchical organization of the elements within the limits of the sentence, as for example generative grammars do, this theory of syntax explores the reciprocal relations which reduce the autonomy of the segments, and regards them as complementary constituents of a phrase.

The aim of this section is not to present the motivations for resorting to this theoretical framework, nor to discuss about the contribution of the analysis of a signed language to the development of this model (see Meurant, 2006b). The more theoretical and syntactic issues will, therefore, only be dealt with very briefly, most attention being given to the relation between the interpretation of the role shift (or person neutralized) forms and the syntactic context within which they appear.

## 2.1 Shot and reverse shot structure

The structure called here “shot and reverse shot” is made up of the succession of two double agreement verbs. Several features create a symmetrical relation between both of them, where the signer’s body is the centre point. Figure 11 illustrates this structure.



*Figure 11: Shot and reverse shot structure*

Both verbal units have the same stem<sup>16</sup> (LOOK), and both undergo person neutralization. This person neutralization affects the initial cell of the first verb, and the final cell of the second one: hence, the hand in the first verb is oriented outwards from the ‘c-locus’, while, in the second verb, it is directed towards the ‘c-locus’. This contrast is accentuated by the spatial inversion of the loci marked by each verb:<sup>17</sup> the final cell of the first verb is associated with an area in space which is precisely opposite, in relation to the ‘c-locus’, to the location of the locus-marker of the initial cell of the second verb. Thus, referring to

16 Without being able to enter here in detailed justifications, it is assumed that the stem of LOOK is made up of the handshape and the movement of the hand; in MOVE, which will be illustrated later, the stem will be seen as provided by the movement of the hand only.

17 In fact, as they are defined in relation to the ‘c-locus’ in the person neutralized form, these “loci” are more precisely “pseudo-deictic loci”. This is why the transcription refers to them as ‘c:a’ and ‘c:-a’.

the case of Figure 11, the first occurrence of LOOK is oriented from the signer's space to the left; as for the second verb, it is oriented from the right to the signer's space. And, if the first verb were directed down and to the left from the signer, the second one would be oriented from above on the right-hand side to the signer. This symmetrical inversion is transcribed by the use of the minus symbol ("–") before one of the letters representing the value of locus ('c:a' vs. 'c:-a'). Finally, the non-manual features that are the gaze, the upper body posture and the facial expression, sustain the contrast between the first and the second term of the relation.<sup>18</sup> The gaze is strictly non-addressed, and directed towards the 'non-c-locus': to the left with the first verb and to the right with the second one, in Figure 11. The shoulders' direction coincides with the gaze line in each part of the structure. The facial expression can be very different from one verb to the other.

This specific combination of features, where the gaze, the hands, the body and the expression together mark a symmetrical inversion between the first and the second part of the construction, results in a specific meaning: the succession of the verbs is seen as describing a one and only action, relating two characters reciprocally involved in the action and shown as the agent and the patient. In each person neutralization form, the signer's body is seen as assuming the role of a different character: the agent first (MARIE, in Figure 11), and then the character affected by the action, which is referred to by the second argument of the first verb (CAROLINE, in this case). This construction of LSFb corresponds to the "AB construction" observed in British Sign Language by Morgan and Woll (2003).<sup>19</sup> In the example of Figure 11, one has even the impression that the hand actually keeps the same position during both parts of the phrase, and that it is the signer's body which is moved from one side to the other. It shows the paradoxical relation between the actual composition (a succession of two verbs and an inversion in relation to the (sole) actual body) and the semantic interpretation imposed by this specific structure (a unique moment of a unique action, and the reciprocal relation between two characters).

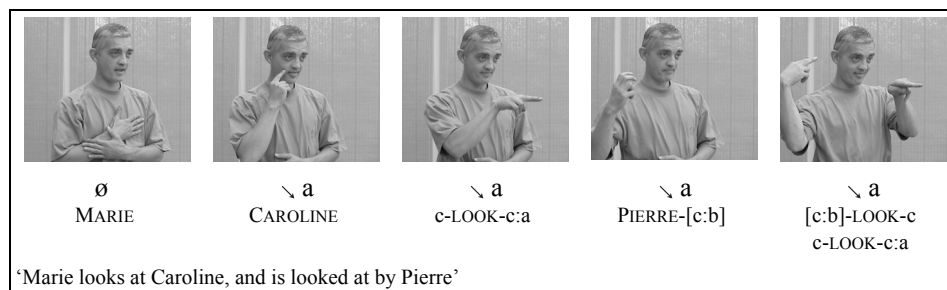
This semantic interpretation of each role shift form as referring to a different character appears to be closely linked with the correlation of all formal features described above as defining the shot and reverse shot; it is broken off as soon as one of these features is absent, and as soon as a noun is inserted between both verbs.<sup>20</sup> The comparison between

18 When only the strong hand is involved in the articulation of the verb, it happens that the weak hand also marks a contrast between the two verbs. In such cases, the weak hand functions together with the non-manual parameters and participates in the characterization of the represented referents.

19 The description of the shot and reverse shot construction as linking two person neutralization forms corresponds with the view of these authors to consider the use of the body in the second part of these constructions as a referential shift rather than as a particular case of classifier. The functioning of the body in the referential system, which they refer to with "Body Location", has been presented here by the notion of "pseudo-deictic anaphora".

20 More precisely, if a noun intervenes, the co-reference between both verbs is not grammatically imposed anymore. It does not mean that the overt mentioning of the agent before the second verb (e.g. MARIE CAROLINE-a c-LOOK-a MARIE -a c:-a-LOOK-c) is impossible or ungrammatical. But, in this case, the semantic co-reference does not originate in the formal co-reference of the shot and reverse shot relation, and is rather due to the overt designation itself. In other respects, the constraint on the absence of any noun phrase between the two verbs does not exclude other kinds of elements: some examples of the corpus show the presence of an adverb such as AT-THIS-MOMENT, or CONTRARY-TO-EXPECTATIONS.

Figure 11 with Figure 12 illustrates this syntactic dependency of the role shift form interpretation.



*Figure 12: Non-Shot and reverse shot structure*

In Figure 12, one can see two successive occurrences of the verb LOOK (the first is shown in the third picture, and the second is produced by the right hand in the fifth picture). Each has the 'c-locus' in one of its cells, which signals (in relation with the non-addressing of the gaze) that each undergoes person neutralization: the first verb is directed outwards from the signer and the second is oriented towards the signer. In spite of these similarities with the structure of Figure 11, the presence of the noun PIERRE, between these two verbs, makes the example of Figure 12 syntactically distinct from the shot and reverse shot structure. Here, both person neutralization forms refer to the same character and each verb expresses a different action, each one involving two characters: the first one says that Marie looks at Caroline, while the second says that Marie is looked at by Pierre.

The syntactic difference between the examples of Figure 11 and Figure 12 consists in the fact that a noun intervenes between the two verbs. Whatever syntactic description may be attributed to this phenomenon,<sup>21</sup> what is emphasized here is that this syntactic difference results in a radical difference in the interpretation of the role shift forms, despite the similar combination of verbs.<sup>22</sup> The person-neutralized forms of the verb LOOK, by themselves, are not specified for any particular reference; the syntactic organization of the shot and reverse shot imposes a specific interpretation of the succession of the two

21 It would be described in terms of 'control of an argument', within the field of generative grammar. In the theoretical framework of "glossology", briefly introduced above, it would be considered a case of "syntactic anaphora". Syntactic anaphora is defined as an asymmetrical relation which affects the constituents' possibilities to enter in relation with other ones. In the case of Figure 11, the second verb's relation with a nominal constituent is cancelled, while the first verb remains free to constitute relations with MARIE and with CAROLINE. By the effect of this "anaphoric" restriction, the second verb becomes co-referent with the first's arguments: this is why the action of the second verb is interpreted as realized by Marie, and affecting Caroline. This kind of restriction ("syntactic anaphora") is opposed, in this theory, to three others, namely, agreement, factorization (both are symmetrical constraints) and government (another asymmetrical restriction, affecting the morphological variability of the constituents). For a further presentation of this typology and of syntactic anaphora, see Meurant (2004, 2006b).

22 More precisely, the second verb in Figure 11 can be compared with the verb articulated by the right hand in the last picture of Figure 12. The simultaneous use of both hands in Figure 12 will be commented further on.

person neutralized forms, which is different from the interpretation of the structure illustrated in Figure 12.

To complete the description of the example of Figure 12, two more comments need to be made. First, there is the striking simultaneous use of both hands shown in the last picture. The weak hand repeats c-LOOK-c:a, previously articulated by the strong hand, while the strong hand is producing c:b-LOOK-c. This possibility<sup>23</sup> for the two verbs to be articulated at the same time is an additional opposition between the syntactic structure of this example and the shot and reverse shot, which strictly imposes the succession of the verbs. The possible simultaneity of c-LOOK-c:a and c:b-LOOK-c in Figure 12 is connected with the constant value of the 'c-locus' in both verbs; in contrast, the necessary successivity of c-LOOK-c:a and c:-a-LOOK-c in the shot and reverse shot is related to the change of referential value of the 'c-locus' during the construction. A second element goes in the same direction: it concerns the non-manual features. From the first picture of Figure 12 to the last one, the signer's shoulders and gaze are directed to the left (marking for the 'c:a-locus'),<sup>24</sup> and the facial expression remains neutral and identical during the complete utterance. This possible permanence of the non-manual parameters marks an additional difference from the shot and reverse shot, which implies the contrast of the gaze and upper body, from the first to the second verb. Again, this characteristic is related to the constant referential value of the 'c-locus' in Figure 12.

To summarize, the shot and reverse shot structure puts two consecutive double agreement verbs into relation. Both have the same stem, and mark the person neutralization in one of their cells. Together with the absence of a noun inserted between the two verbs, the symmetrical arrangement of their morphological composition (affecting the symmetry of the manual and non-manual parameters) causes a particular co-reference within the structure: both verbs refer to a one and only action, and the second verb's agent and patient are given as identical to those of the first verb. Hence, the shot and reverse shot imposes a different interpretation of each person neutralization form: the 'c-locus' relates to a different referent in each part of the structure. It has been shown, by the comparison of an apparently similar structure, that the referential properties of the 'c-loci' in the shot and reverse shot are closely related with the syntactic form of this structure. And the interpretation of the relation between each person neutralization form and its referent is guided by the combination of the gaze behaviour, the upper body posture, the facial expression and, for some examples, the weak hand position (cf. section 3).

## 2.2 Scale alternation structure

The scale alternation structure consists in the succession of three verbal constituents. It has an 'A-B-A' or a 'B-A-B' structure, where 'A' represents a verb of movement. Two main features define this construction. First, the 'B' verb, which is not a verb of movement

23 The same utterance, without the repetition of the first verb by the weak hand, would have caused the same interpretation. What is remarkable is the opposition between this possibility in Figure 12 and the necessary linearity of the verbs in the shot and reverse shot structure.

24 To correctly understand the example, it may be important to know that the shoulders of the actual interlocutor are parallel with the horizontal borders of the picture, and that nobody faces the signer from his left. Then, the gaze is focusing on a portion of space and provides an anaphoric value of pseudo-deictic locus ('c:a-locus').

(most often, it is a limb classifier verb), is in the person neutralization form. Second, the “embracing verbs” are identical: they have the same stem; if it is the verb of movement (‘A’), both instances have the same path; and if it is the ‘B’ verb, both realizations show the person neutralization.<sup>25</sup> The semantic particularity of this structure is that the three verbs refer to the same agent, and are interpreted as showing two complementary parts of the same action: the path of the movement and the character’s posture and expression during its movement. Figure 13 provides an ‘A-B-A’ example in its three last pictures.

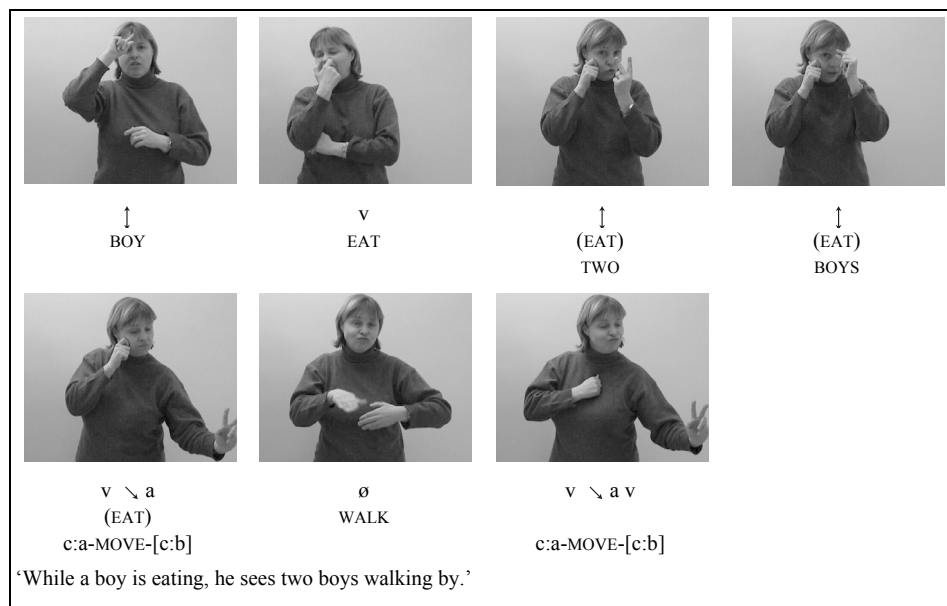


Figure 13: Scale alternation structure (A-B-A)

The left hand articulates twice the verb MOVE<sup>26</sup> and, in between, both hands are involved in the articulation of WALK in person neutralization form. In this particular combination, the WALK verb, unmarked for person, is made coreferent with the agent of the MOVE verb, represented by the handshape configuration. The “scale alternation” name, adapted from Engberg-Pedersen (1993:303), reflects this semantic effect due to the permanence of the agent despite the multiplicity and the variety of verbs: the same character is indeed alternately shown as a scale model, through the handshape of the MOVE verb and, in real size, through the signer’s body during the realization of the person neutralization form.

The interpretation of the scale alternation structure makes it necessary to consider the signer’s body (posture and expression) with the ‘B’ verb in neutralization form and the

25 A variant of the same structure is limited to a binary construction (A-B or B-A) with no repetition of the first verb in closing position. The existence of (all or some of) such variations (A-B-A, B-A-B, A-B or B-A) has been observed in different signed languages. This should lead to re-think the claim of the obligatory sequence of “manner verb – path verb” in serial verbs constructions. See Benedicto, Cvejanov & Quer (this volume).

26 The right hand’s activity will be commented in section 2.3.

handshake of the ‘A’ verb to be semantically co-referent. But, in contrast, the signer’s body does not refer to the same referent with the three verbs. In Figure 13, for example, the referent represented by the signer’s body, gaze, expression and right hand, during the MOVE verb (i.e. a boy at the window), does not coincide with the characters referred to by the signer’s body, gaze and expression, in the WALK verb, (i.e. the two boys walking in the street).<sup>27</sup> A comparison with the example in Figure 14 will highlight the fact that the syntactic organization of the scale alternation structure provides the instructions necessary to interpret the person neutralization form, which in itself is under-specified, and suitable for any reference. At the same time, it will reveal that together with those described above, an additional constraint defines the scale alternation structure: as in the shot and reverse shot structure, no nominal constituent can intervene between the verbs.

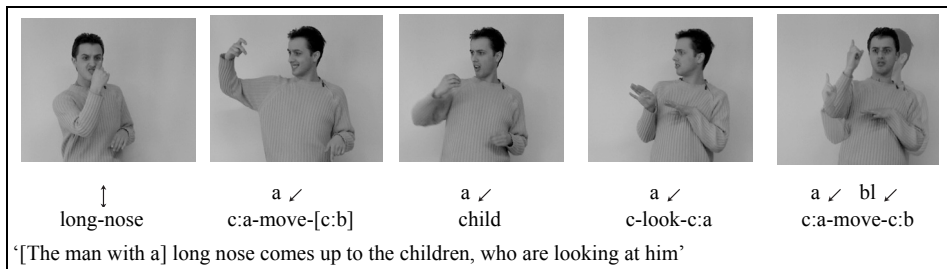


Figure 14: Non-Scale alternation structure

Three verbs make up the example of Figure 14: two occurrences of MOVE surround the verb LOOK, which is realized in the person neutralization form (the diverting of the gaze means that the ‘c-locus’ does not have the deictic value of first person). Both verbs MOVE share the same path in space, beginning forward right and moving in the left direction. These elements make this example similar to that of Figure 13, so far. However, the insertion of the noun CHILD makes the syntactic arrangement of Figure 14 radically different from the scale alternation structure, and gives rise to other instructions for the interpretation of the person neutralized form and of the referential value of the signer’s body during the utterance. In the case of Figure 14, the ‘c-locus’ of LOOK is not co-referent with the agent of MOVE, referred to by the handshape (i.e. the man with a long nose). Rather, the gaze, the body posture and the facial expression of the signer are shown as referring to those of the child; that is true during the verb LOOK, but in fact it happens even before, from the first verb MOVE onwards. As a consequence of the impermanence of the agent, the two verbs are showing two different actions, which are not to be interpreted as two complementary aspects of a unique and more general action (i.e. the path and the attitude of a character during the movement): they are seen as two simultaneous actions,

27 Hence, in both occurrences of the verb MOVE, in Figure 13, a “referential division” of the signer’s body appears: the gaze, the right hand and the upper-body show the boy at the window (this role shift remains from the previous person-neutralized verb EAT, by the holding of the hand position), while the left hand represents the two boys in the street. Such cases are treated as “double personal transfer” by Cuxac (2000:63-70). They will be distinguished from the “scale overlap” structures in section 2.3.

performed by two different characters. The semantic coherence of the utterance is due to the constant referential value of the ‘c-locus’, which is precisely a characteristic that is absent in the scale alternation structure. It appears, then, that the presence of the noun between the first two verbs inverts the referential interpretation of the role shift form, as the comparison of Figure 14 and Figure 13 shows, even if the sequence of verbs composing the utterance is similar in both cases. The same oppositions, at the levels of both syntax and semantics, can be observed when comparing Figure 14 and Figure 15, which represents another example of the scale alternation structure (in its ‘B-A-B’ version). In Figure 15, the role shift forms of the ‘B’ verbs are made co-referent to the agent of the ‘A’ verb (the man with a long nose), represented by the handshape of the signer. But the gaze, the body posture and the expression of the signer in ‘A’ do not represent those of this agent (rather, they refer to the child’s). All these characteristics are the same as for Figure 13.

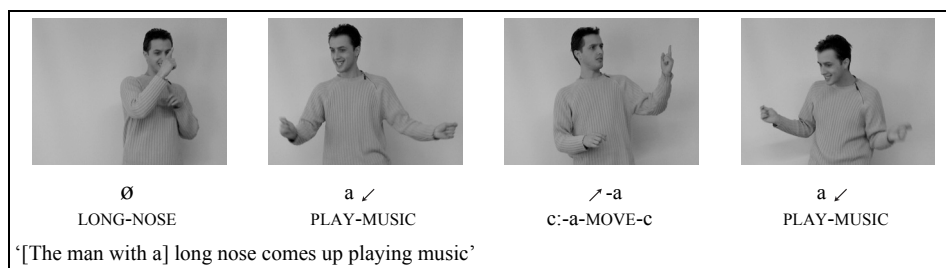


Figure 15: Scale alternation structure (B-A-B)

To sum up: in the scale alternation structure, the interpretation of the person neutralization form of a ‘B’ verb as referring to the agent of the ‘A’ verb – causing the effect of a scale alternation – is due to the combination of syntactic constraints which specifies this structure, in contrast with others, even if they are apparently very similar. This combination of constraints of the scale alternation includes the necessary presence of a verb of movement (the ‘A’ verb), the neutralization of the value of person in the other verb type (the ‘B’ verb), the fact that the first and the third verbs are identical (identical stem, identical path of the ‘A’ verb and identical person neutralization in the ‘B’ verb), and the absence of a nominal constituent between the verbs.<sup>28</sup> The information given by the signer’s gaze, upper body posture, facial expression and, at times, weak hand during the production of the ‘A’ verbs is to be interpreted as representing a referent distinct from the one referred to by the movement of the strong hand.

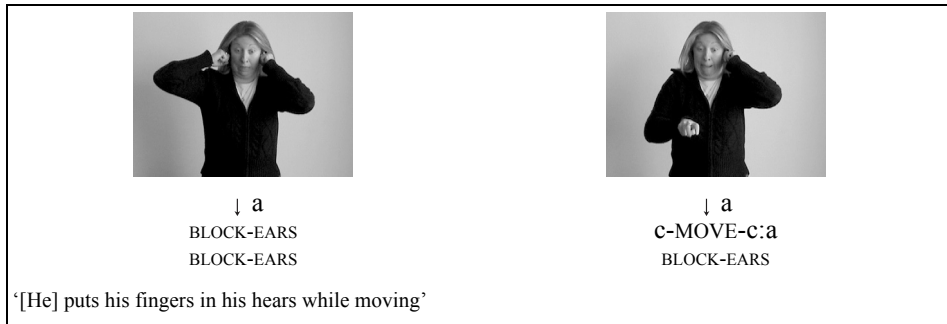
### 2.3 Scale overlap structure

In the scale overlap structure, two verbs enter in relation with each other. First, only one verb is produced. This is then held in a stationary configuration by one hand as the other hand produces the second verb. The simultaneous articulation of two different signs

28 The presence of a nominal constituent between the last two verbs produces the cancellation of the scale alternation relation in the same way as (as illustrated in Figure 14) when a nominal constituent appears between the first two verbs.

frequently occurs in signed languages. This simultaneity can occur in shot and reverse shot structures (where, as pointed out in section 2.1, note 18, the weak hand provides information regarding the represented character), and in a wide variety of cases described as “double-personal transfer” by Cuxac (2000). But what is specific in the scale overlap structure (and not considered in Cuxac’s typology of double-personal transfers) is the fact that the two different and simultaneously produced verbs are referring to the same agent. It will now be shown that this co-reference to the same agent is due to a combination of several formal features. Figure 16 provides an example of this particular construction.

As in the scale alternation structure, the phrase contains two verb categories, one of them being a verb of movement. But, in the scale overlap structure, the verb of movement always appears as the second element. In comparison with the ‘A-B-A’ or ‘B-A-B’ structures of the scale alternation, the scale overlap has a ‘B-BA’ appearance. The first verb undergoes the neutralization of the value of person, which necessarily implies the suspending of the gaze-addressing. One additional characteristic specifies the scale overlap structure: the path of the ‘A’ verb systematically takes an outward direction, away from the signer’s space.



*Figure 16: Scale overlap structure*

As a result of this specific arrangement, the second part of the structure simultaneously shows (1) the posture and expression of a character and (2) the path of its movement. This means that the handshape of the verb of movement (‘A’) and the signer’s upper body during the realization of the person neutralization form (‘B’) represent the same referent. The result is an iconic incoherence because the character represented in real size through the role shift seems to be watching his or her own movements.



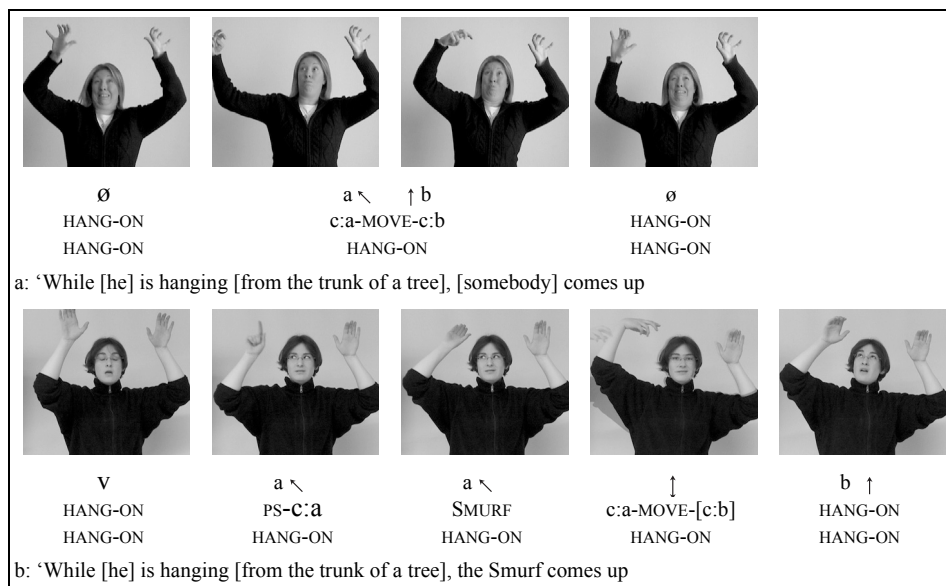


Figure 17: Non-Scale overlap structures

These semantic features only apply to the syntactic organization described above. The absence of one of the described characteristics results in another referential interpretation, even with an apparently identical combination of verbs. In Figure 17a, for example, a verb in person neutralization form is articulated first and held by one hand as the other hand realizes the verb MOVE. However, the path of the verb of movement is not directed outwards from the signer's space, and this differentiates this structure from the scale overlap structure. Correlatively, the role shift form is not made co-referent to the agent of the verb of movement, represented by the handshape. The semantic coherence of the example in Figure 17a (in the same way as in Figure 17b) results from another process. It is provided by the fact that the path of movement is defined as being in relation to the role shift form: the initial and the final loci of MOVE receive their value through a "pseudo-deictic" process. And the comparison of Figure 17a and Figure 17b reveals that, when the movement of the 'A' verb is not directed outwards from the signer's space, a nominal constituent can be inserted between the two verbs: both characteristics seem to be related, and cause the same semantic difference, in relation to the scale overlap construction.

In the same way, the example in Figure 13 (especially the fifth picture), already commented on with respect to the scale alternation structure it includes, confirms the same claim. The referential interpretation of the person neutralization form in a scale overlap structure, as being co-referent to the agent of the simultaneously produced verb of movement, is not due to the person neutralization form in itself, nor to the simultaneity of both verbs. It results from the combination of formal features, and disappears as soon as this combination is broken up. The start of Figure 13 shows the verb EAT first, in person neutralization form. This verb is held by the right hand as the left hand realizes the nominal intervener TWO BOYS and then the verb MOVE. Despite the presence of a 'BA' structure in

the fifth picture, which looks like the second constituent of the scale overlap construction, two elements signal the lack of co-reference between the role shift form and the agent of the verb of movement: first, the path of the movement does not originate in the ‘c-locus’ and, second, the noun TWO BOYS is inserted in between the two verbs. In this example, the signer’s body is “referentially divided” (i.e. the right hand and the body posture refer to the boy who is eating, while the left hand refers to the two walking boys), which is not the case in the scale overlap structure: in this latter construction, all pieces of information conveyed by the signer’s strong hand, weak hand, gaze, body posture and facial expression, converge in referring to the same character.

To sum up, the scale overlap structure is made up of two verbs, simultaneously articulated in the second part of the structure, and both referring to the same agent. This one is shown at the same time as a scale model, represented by the signer’s handshape, and in real size, through the signer’s body. The examples discussed highlighted that this special referential and iconic interpretation of the manual and non-manual parameters is closely tied to several formal elements. These elements, in their combination, define the scale overlap structure and distinguish it from other constructions, even if these appear to be very similar. The formal definition of the scale overlap structure includes the presence of a verb of movement and of another verb type in the person neutralization form, organized in a ‘B-BA’ structure; the anchoring of the origin of the path of the movement verb in the ‘c-locus’; and the lack of nominal constituent inserted between the two verbs.

## 2.4 Summary

A close analysis of each of the three structures presented here and the comparison between them shows that the semantic and iconic interpretation of the role shift forms depends on the syntax. It is the combination of the syntactic constraints of each structure which gives rise to the particular co-reference of each structure (reference to the same action or to the same agent), and which guides the interpretation of the manual and non-manual parameters (their joint or rather independent functioning). The person neutralization form in itself is underspecified and suitable for any reference. This can be seen as an explanation for the very high productivity of role shift in the syntax of signed languages; and it supports the analysis of the role shift forms (outside direct speech) as person neutralization forms, i.e. as forms that are made independent of the deictic frame of reference by a suspension of the gaze, and that define the signer’s body as the landmark for the references.

In the next and last part it will now be proposed to relate the above description of the role shift forms (defined in terms of person neutralized forms, underspecified for their referential value and therefore depending on the syntactic context in which they appear) with the notion of point of view they are often linked to. By referring to the enunciative distinction between the “Speaker” and the “Enunciator”, it will be shown that the person neutralization forms should not be confused with the deictic shift which specifies direct speech.

### 3 Role shift and the construction of discourse

Each of the three structures described in the second part of this paper produces a specific effect of semantic coherence. The “shot and reverse shot” shows the relation between two characters in a single action, while the “scale alternation” and the “scale overlap” express the attribution of two actions to a single character. The relation between the grammatical composition and the semantic effects created by these structures is summarized in Figure 18 (where ‘Da’ designates a double agreement verb, ‘A’ a verb of movement and ‘B’ another verb class).

But, in addition, the presence of person neutralization forms in these structures gives rise to specific effects of layering of voices at the level of enunciation. The notion of Enunciator, from Ducrot’s (1984) theory of Polyphony, allows to describe those effects and to point out what makes them different from those appearing in direct speech. The notion of person neutralization form, distinguished in the first section from the first-person and from the other deictic forms, will provide further evidence for its relevance at this level of enunciative structure, since the person neutralization hypothesis allows the notion of point of view to be anchored in the grammatical description of the structures under study.

	Grammatical analysis	Semantic analysis	
		SCENARIO	
	verbs	characters	actions
<i>Shot and reverse shot</i>	2 : Da-Da	2	1
<i>Scale alternation</i>	3 : A-B-A, B-A-B	1	(1+1): path + attitude
<i>Scale overlap</i>	2 : B-BA	1	(1+1): path + attitude

Figure 18: Grammatical and semantic composition of the three structures under study

#### 3.1 Enunciative notions of Speaker and Enunciator

The term “polyphony” is used in the field of discourse analysis and pragmatics to describe the fact that utterances can express and combine different voices. This dimension has been systematically elaborated by Ducrot, within the framework of his enunciation theory; he analyzes how an utterance indicates the superposition of different voices. In his perspective, polyphony is not restricted to reported speech and thought; he rather describes and distinguishes the distinct categories of speech and thought representation and connects them to more general enunciative processes. According to Ducrot (1984), a distinction has to be made between the Speaker and the Enunciator, and both should not be confused with the “speaking subject”, i.e. the empirical person who is physically talking (or signing). The Speaker, on the one hand, is the abstract entity responsible for an illocutionary act; it<sup>29</sup> builds the enunciative field by addressing the interlocutor with second-person forms, while in that field it is itself referred to by means of first person forms. It can be compared

29 In order to underline the abstract nature of the Speaker and of the Enunciator, they will be referred to by the neutral pronominal form (‘it’). The Speaker and the Enunciator are not persons but only discourse beings: fictive entities which only exist through the discourse.

with the narrator of a narrative (while, in contrast, the author can be compared to the “speaking subject”). The Enunciator, on the other hand, is only responsible for an attitude or a point of view, expressed through the Speaker’s speech. It is not referred to by the first person and does not address any interlocutor with the second person; no word is attributed to the Enunciator. It can be compared with the focalizer in the narrative. The distinction between these two enunciative entities is illustrated in the following sentence<sup>30</sup> (A reproaches B for having made an error and insults him; B gets angry and says): « *Ah, I am a fool; I will get you! Just you wait!* ». The Speaker is referred to by *I*, and is responsible for the whole utterance, which it addresses to the *You*. But, in order to correctly interpret the utterance, one has to understand that the Speaker cannot be said to be responsible for the point of view expressed in the first part: the origin of this insult does not coincide with the origin of the threat in the second part. The point of view according to which B is a fool is attributed to A; in this sense, A is present as an Enunciator within the illocutionary act of the Speaker represented by B.

### 3.2 Gaze, Speaker and Enunciator in Signed Language

Two reasons lead to assume that in LSFB the instance of the Speaker is linked with the addressing of the eye gaze. First, as explained in the first part of this study, the value of person comes from the ratio between the directions of (1) the hands and (2) the addressing of the gaze. Thus, the very creation of the values of first and second person, from which the Speaker is defined, is founded on the gaze addressing. Second, – and this sustains the previous idea – the beginning of an utterance, for instance the start of a narrative in LSFB is systematically marked by an eye blink. We assume that this initial blink can be viewed as a kind of trigger of the uttering act and, moreover, as the marker of the distinction between the signer, as “speaking subject”, and the Speaker, as the enunciative abstract entity which is responsible for the utterance.

As has already been emphasized in the first part of this paper concerning the value of person, what is called “addressing of the gaze” here should not be conceptualized as a particular physical orientation, connected to the physical presence of the actual participants in the communication.<sup>31</sup> It consists in the speech act, by which, in a signed language, a deictic frame of reference is built; which is independent of the actual presence of the participants. An example like that presented in Figure 19 supports this claim, and leads to a definition of direct speech.

30 From Ducrot (1984, 191). Translation ours. The original example in French is “Ah, je suis un imbécile; eh bien, attends un peu!”.

31 The eye blink at the beginning of a narrative shows the same distinction: before the blink, there is only the eye contact between the signer and the actual interlocutor (or the objective of the camera); and after the blink, there is the Speaker addressing its discursive addressee.

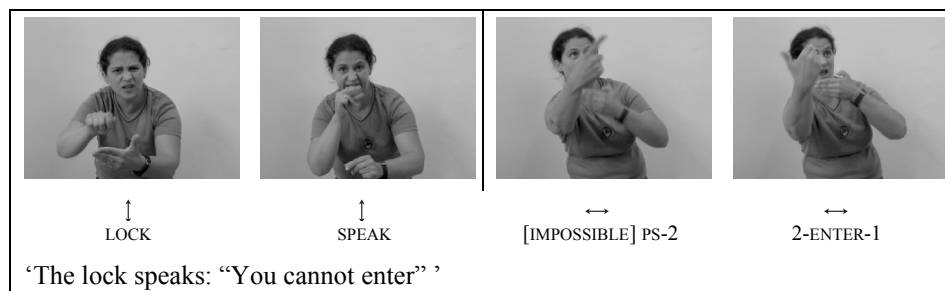


Figure 19: Role shift in direct speech

The signer is narrating a part of *Alice in Wonderland*, where the lock of a door speaks to Alice. Within a single utterance, the gaze-addressing is doubled. Physically, this is shown by the succession of two gaze directions. But what makes explicit the specificity of this change in gaze direction, in comparison with the diversion of the gaze analyzed in the first part of this paper as creating (anaphoric) loci or pseudo-deictic loci from the signer's landmark, is not only the wide opening of the eyes and the raised brows but also the connected PS, coincident with the direction of the gaze addressing, which receives the value of a second person marker. The addressee of the gaze and of this pointing sign in the second part of the utterance is a fictional and discursive being: no real person is present in this part of space (the only person physically present, apart from the signer, is located behind the camera). But, by means of the addressing, the signer (linguistically) actualizes Alice in front of the speaking lock; the signer provokes the discursive existence of a second deictic frame of reference, in which a second illocutionary act is set-up: coincident with this second addressing of the gaze, a pointing towards the chest would mark a first-person value, and would be understood as the self designation of the lock, as Speaker. This example offers a visual representation of what Ducrot points out as the fundamental definition of direct speech:<sup>32</sup> the staging of the enunciation as double, by the doubling of the first and second persons' references (1984:198-199); or, using Vandelanotte's (2004: 490-492) formula, in creating a "deictic shift".<sup>33</sup>

32 Ducrot (1984:196-199) demonstrates the irrelevance of the general idea of direct speech as reproducing a preceding speech act in its materiality, as a true report. See also, in the same way, Authier-Revuz (1995), Rosier (1999), Vandelanotte (2004).

33 Vandelanotte (2004) describes direct speech as resulting in "two separate and fully operational deictic centres: "the Speaker in direct speech/thought dramatically yields the floor to the Sayer/cognizant [i.e. the "consciousness being represented in the represented speech situation]". We suggest that the "shifted reference" described by Engberg-Pedersen (1995), i.e. "the use of pronouns from a quoted person's perspective", should be extended to the notion of "deictic shift". In this view, not only the pointing sign towards the chest, but also other uses of the 'c-locus', when they are coincident with the addressing of the gaze, are analyzed as producing the value of first person. This means that examples showing "the use of the c-locus for someone other than the sender" (Engberg-Pedersen 1995:146) and occurring in a direct speech context would not be analyzed as "shifted locus" but as "shifted reference" since in this case, i.e. in the case of their occurrence in direct speech, the gaze is addressed.

Since direct speech is related to the doubling of the Speaker's entity and of the deictic frame of reference within a single utterance produced by a single actual sender, and since the Speaker's existence is determined, in signed language, by the act of gaze addressing and by the resulting deictic frame of reference, the role shift forms studied so far cannot in any account be associated with direct speech. The point of view they mark in neutralizing the deictic value of person cannot be confused with the presence of a Speaker entity. Rather, the presence of a role shift form in structures like the ones presented in the second part of this paper, leads to the expression of an 'unspeaking' entity within the utterance of a Speaker. According to Ducrot's distinction, the point of view effect caused by these role shift forms would be attributed to the notion of Enunciator: the point of view holder is not presented as responsible for an uttering act; it is not identified by the presence of first and second person forms but, on the contrary, by the suspending of any personal and deictic reference.

This assumption appears to be consistent with the features of those role shift forms presented in the previous sections. They have been described as person-neutralized forms, and as referentially under-specified. Both these characteristics fit in with the unmarked nature of the point of view or of the focalizer in a narrative, which makes its identification uncertain. The semantic information provided by the gaze direction, the posture of the signer's body, the facial expression and, at times, the weak hand, guides the referential attribution of the point of view, or, in other words, the assimilation between the Enunciator entity and one of the characters of the narrative. But this interpretation has to reckon with the fundamental ambiguity of the person neutralization form. For example, the referential instruction leading to consider the hand and the body's information as together representing the same character (as in the scale overlap structure, see the second picture of Figure 16) or two distinct characters (as in the other "double personal transfer" cases, such as illustrated in the fifth picture of Figure 13, or in the last picture of Figure 14) is not provided by the role shift form itself; separated from its syntactic and discursive context, it is ambiguous.

In this view, the commonly called "point of view of the third person", which Banfield (1982) describes as a process of representation of discourse and thought in narration, could be related, in sign language, with the representation of the 'unspeaking' action of an impersonal entity. And the "shifted locus" described by Engberg-Pedersen (1995) should then be clearly restricted to the non-direct speech contexts; the direct speech context, in contrast, would be related with the "deictic shift", in Vandelandotte's terminology.

### 3.3 Role shift and polyphony within syntactic structures

The role shifting which appears in the three syntactic constructions previously described does not occur in the context of direct speech (since there is no duplication of the personal system), but rather within the utterance of a single Speaker, generally identified as a neutral narrator. The polyphonic effects of such an intertwining between the Speaker's voice and the Enunciator's perspective take a specific form in each of the structures described.

The shot and reverse shot structure makes use of two contrasted person neutralization forms. It provides the keys to understand the opposition between two Enunciators: the action is first shown from the point of view of the agent, and then from the reciprocal per-

spective of the patient affected by the action. According to the discursive context, each Enunciator can be associated to one or another character with respect to the information given by the facial expression, the direction of the gaze or the position of the signer's upper body.<sup>34</sup> The "shot and reverse shot" structure allows one action to be expressed that connects two characters, for example with different heights, or situated in different areas in space, or with different personalities, moods or feelings, etc. The syntactic arrangement signals an opposition between two Enunciators; and, thanks to the information provided by the non-manual elements, the Enunciators will be associated with particular characters in the narrative.

In the "scale alternation" structure, the action of the one and only character is represented alternately from its own perspective and from an external point of view, according to which it appears as a scale model: this alternation in points of view is understood on the basis of the syntactic structure of the phrase. The alternation of the two kinds of verbs does not only imply the scale alternation in the representation of the character, but it also entails the alternation of the enunciative points of view from which the action is depicted: the internal point of view of the character itself and an external point of view (which according to the accuracy of the information given by the non-manual features is in some cases identified with another character of the narrative and in other cases only presented as being external, and then understood as referring to the narrator).

In the "scale overlap" structure, the unaddressed gaze, as well as the facial expression and the chest's posture, remain fixed. The whole phrase is expressed from the perspective of a single Enunciator. In the second part of the structure, this character is depicted simultaneously on a small scale (by the signer's fingers) and on a large scale (by the signer's body); however, the internal point of view expressed in the first constituent remains dominant for the entire structure.

Figure 20 summarizes these polyphonic specificities, connected with the grammatical and semantic properties of each structure.

	Grammatical analysis	Semantic and Pragmatic analysis		
		SCENARIO		POLYPHONY
	verbs	characters	actions	points of view
<i>Shot and reverse shot</i>	2 : Da-Da	2	1	2
<i>Scale alternation</i>	3 : A-B-A, B-A-B	1	(1+1): path + attitude	2
<i>Scale overlap</i>	2 : B-BA	1	(1+1): path + attitude	1

Figure 20: Polyphonic properties of the three structures under study

## 4 Conclusion

In the wide variety of linguistic phenomena considered as "role shifting" in the scientific literature as well as in the signer's linguistic consciousness, it seems necessary to make some distinctions. The act of representing (parts of) a character's body actions through

34 These elements illustrate the "shifted attribution of expressive elements" described by Engberg-Pedersen (1995).

(parts of) the signer's body actions has a different grammatical functioning when it appears in direct speech and when it is produced out of direct speech.

It has been proposed, in the first part of the paper, that the iconic effect of 'role shifting' that appears out of the context of reported speech can be considered as being built on a neutralization of the value of person. This proposal is based on the study of the personal pronoun system in LSFB, which reveals the central role of the gaze in the construction of the value of person. It is part of a wider discussion of the referential mechanisms in LSFB, which focuses on the relation between the hand and the gaze behaviour. In this perspective, the person neutralization form is distinguished from the creating of locus values in the signing space; and both these anaphoric processes are opposed to the construction of deictic references in relation to the gaze addressing.

The second part of the study has been dedicated to the description of three syntactic structures of LSFB. All three, the "shot and reverse shot", the "scale alternation" and the "scale overlap", illustrate the syntactic productivity of the person neutralization forms of verbs. They also show that the referential interpretation of these person neutralized forms is oriented by their syntactic context.

Finally, the third part of this paper presented arguments which lead us to recognize a clear distinction between, on the one hand, the presence of person neutralization forms in an utterance and, on the other, the multiplication of the voices in direct speech. According to these arguments, the "shifted locus" process is shown as strictly reserved for non-direct speech utterances.

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## **6 Appendix: Notation Conventions**

The examples of LSFB are transcribed in a multi-line system. The first line indicates the eye gaze behaviour. The second line (and, in some cases, the third line) indicate the activity of the hands: if necessary, the second line refers to the right hand's articulation and the third line to the left hand's articulation. The last line constitutes an English translation (between '...' signs).



Gaze:	↑ ↔	Addressed gaze (↔: during the reported speech of a direct speech utterance)
	↖ ↗ ↘ ↙ ↓ ↑	Eye gaze diverted from the addressing line; the direction of the arrow schematize the actual direction of the gaze
	↘ a	Gaze installing a value of (anaphoric or pseudo-deictic) locus
	ø	Unfixed eyes, without any significant direction
	v	Eye blink
Hands:	SEND	English gloss for a manual sign
	LONG-NOSE	Multi-word gloss standing for one sign only
	PS	Pointing sign (pronoun or determiner, in verbal or nominal contexts)
	ACC	Sign marking the accomplished aspect
	1, 2, 3	Personal values
	c or c-locus	The locus located in the signer's space
	a, b	Loci installed in the signing space by the gaze focus
	a vs. -a	Loci symmetrically inverted in space
	c:a, c:b	Loci defined in relation to the c-locus of a person neutralization form ('pseudo-deictic locus')
	ø	Unspecified direction or point in space
	( )	Position of the hand which maintains a precedent sign
	[ ]	Information given afterwards or outside the transcribed excerpt

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